

Information Guide on the Outer Regional, Remote and Access Support Payment (Access Payment)

The Australian Government's Helping Children with Autism (HCWA) and Better Start for Children with Disability (Better Start) packages provide a payment of \$2,000 for families of children who are registered for Early Intervention funding and live in a location defined as Outer Regional, Remote or Very Remote by the Australian Bureau of Statistics' Accessibility/Remoteness Index of Australia (ARIA+). The Outer Regional, Remote and Access Support Payment (Access Payment) is intended to assist families in outer regional, remote or very remote locations with the higher costs of accessing services.

Payments to families who are eligible for the Access Payment based on their residential address are processed through FaHCSIA's Online Funding Management System (FOFMS) by Autism Advisors in HCWA and the Registration and Information Service (RIS) in Better Start.

In "**exceptional circumstances**", families who do not qualify for the payment on the basis of their residential address may be eligible for the Access Payment. To be eligible under exceptional circumstances, the family must:

- Demonstrate that they are experiencing multiple, significant barriers that directly impact their ability to access HCWA or Better Start Early Intervention services for their child;
- Demonstrate how the Access Payment will assist the family gain better access to HCWA or Better Start Early Intervention services for their child; and
- Provide evidence that they have investigated all other options of getting access to Early Intervention service providers and other options of support that may be available to them.

Multiple, significant barriers may include, but are not limited to, a combination of at least three criteria across two of these domains:

Locational	Financial	Personal
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Over 100 kilometres from nearest service provider ▪ 90 minutes or more via public transport from nearest service provider ▪ School-based or home-based therapies are unavailable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Parent or carer receives a Commonwealth Government income support payment such as Carer Payment, NewStart, Disability Support Pension ▪ Financial hardship as a result of unemployment or limited employment ▪ Inability to meet cost of basic living expenses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Isolation or limited family and other support networks ▪ Sole care of child/children ▪ Child/children not in the care of parents ▪ Family member with disability or significant health issue that requires ongoing care ▪ Recent death of a family member ▪ No child care options available outside of school hours ▪ Lack of permanent housing

The remaining amount of HCWA or Better Start funding will be taken into account with the criteria in decision making. If access to early intervention funding is close to being fully expended this is an indication that there has been access to early intervention services.

A family with more than one child eligible for HCWA or Better Start funding may be eligible to the Access Payment in respect of each eligible child on the proviso that exceptional circumstances exist for each child.

Under no circumstances will the Access Payment be approved where the child is nearing their eligibility end date, i.e. 7 years of age or where the HCWA or Better Start Early Intervention funding for the child has already been expended.

Application Process

Criteria	Process
<p>Family lives in a location defined as Outer Regional, Remote or Very Remote by the Australian Bureau of Statistics' Accessibility/Remoteness Index of Australia (<u>ARIA+</u>).</p> <p>(Processed by Autism or RIS Advisors)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Automatic eligibility based on family's residential address. ▪ Payment is processed through FOFMS by Autism or RIS Advisors.
<p>Exceptional circumstances.</p> <p>(Processed by FaHCSIA)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Each case will be assessed individually by FaHCSIA. Meeting three or more criteria across two domains (refer to table on page one) does not automatically mean that a child will be eligible for the Access payment. Final decisions on eligibility are at the discretion of FaHCSIA. ▪ Applications for consideration due to “exceptional circumstances” must be submitted by an Autism or RIS Advisor on the attached form. ▪ A family must be able to demonstrate multiple, significant barriers to accessing HCWA or Better Start Early Intervention services AND demonstrate how the Access Payment will assist them to gain better access to HCWA or Better Start Early Intervention services for their child. ▪ A family with more than one child eligible for HCWA or Better Start funding may be eligible to the Access Payment in respect of each eligible child on the proviso that exceptional circumstances exist for each child. ▪ FaHCSIA will notify Autism or RIS Advisors of all decisions by email. Where a request for consideration due to exceptional circumstances is approved, FaHCSIA will adjust the eligibility flag in FOFMS. ▪ Payment is processed on FOFMS by Autism or RIS Advisors. ▪ Where an application for consideration due to exceptional circumstances is unsuccessful, families may wish to request a review of the decision. Requests should be addressed to the Branch Manager, Autism and Early Intervention Branch in FaHCSIA via email at ASD.Support@fahcsia.gov.au or better.start@fahcsia.gov.au or post to FaHCSIA Box 7576 Canberra Business Centre ACT 2610.

Note: Autism and RIS Advisors are required to maintain records to ensure accountability of all decisions made in relation to public funds.

**For the purposes of income tax exemption, this payment is called the “Outer Regional and Remote payment”. This title applies to payments received under both HCWA and Better Start.*

Access Payment Application Form

Please Note: All supporting documentation must be attached to this form

Name of Child: _____ **CRN:** _____

Please provide details of the multiple, significant barriers that directly impacting on the family's ability to access HCWA or Better Start Early Intervention Services for their child:

Please explain how the Access Payment will assist the family get better access to HCWA or Better Start Early Intervention Service Providers for their child:

Has evidence supporting the above been considered by you? Yes No

Has all supporting documentation been attached to this form? Yes No

Are you satisfied that this family is experiencing significant barriers gaining access to HCWA or Better Start Early Intervention Panel Service Providers? Yes No

Can the family demonstrate that the Access Payment would reduce or remove the barriers, and increase their child's access to HCWA or Better Start Early Intervention Panel Service Providers? Yes No

Has the family previously applied for the Access Payment on behalf of another child? Yes No

Autism or RIS Advisor:

Signature _____ Name _____ Date _____